



Connaughtman's Rambles to Liverpool

Within four miles of Castlebar, in the province of Connaught, lived a man of the name of Shawn Slattery, who went over to England to reap the harvest and cut down the country.

The first day's journey he travelled seventy-four Irish miles till he came into the town of Drogheda. That night, no doubt, he was tired and fatigued. He went into a lodging-house to get a lodging, but could get none. He went into several houses, but all the lodgings were taken up. On returning back, he went into one of the lodging-houses a second time. A black man was sitting by the fireside. He asked the woman to give him a lodging.

"I'll give you part of a bed," said she, "in case that you sleep with that black man."

"Oh! save us, Missu, how could I sleep with him? sure he's no Christian, but only a black!"

"If you could not," said she, "be off, I have no place for you."

Well, said the Connaughtman to himself, there's no doubt but I'm tired and fatigued after my long day's journey, and I must be up two hours before day, and go to Dublin for the steamboat to overtake myself to carry me to Liverpool. So Shawn agreed to sleep with the black man. He took supper and went to bed, giving the woman directions to call him two hours before day. The moment he went to bed he fell fast asleep.

The black was a good Christian and a painter by trade. When he got the Connaughtman asleep, he took a pot of black paint and his brush, and painted his face, neck, hands, and feet as black as himself. In the morning the woman called him two hours before day. He got up, dressed himself, packed his bundle, and away he went.—Going through the streets, he met a watchman who keenly eyed him by the light of the lamps.

"Good morrow, sir," said the watchman.

"Good morrow at you for it," said the Connaughtman.

"'Tis a fine morning, master," said the watchman, "what makes you be up so early?"

The Connaughtman said he was going to Dublin to meet the steamboat, and that he should be there at nine o'clock.

"Then," said the watchman, "is it long since you left the Indies?"

"What do you mean by the Indies?" asked the Connaughtman, "sure I never was in the Indies."

"Where did you come from?" inquired the watchman.

"I came from Castlebar, in the county of Connaught."

"Then," said the watchman, "I don't see many of your color from that part of the country."

"Why, what color am I more than you?" said the Connaughtman.

"Why, sure you're a black," said the watchman.

"Me a black!" cried the Connaughtman, "I would not believe you; I am as white a man as you are."

"But I'll let you know you're not," said the watchman, pulling a small pocket-glass out and placing it before the Connaughtman's eyes, who was thunderstruck when he beheld himself entirely black.

"'Tis true for you," said he, "I slept with a black last night; stop for a while."

Away he ran back to the lodging-house, and rapped murder at the door. The woman put her head out of the window, and asked him what he did want, "O mistress, it was the black you called this morning, let me go to bed, and do you call the white man?" She had to open the door for him, get warm water and soap and wash off the paint. When he saw himself white, "Oh, ho!" said he, "here is my own self again. Good morning."

Going down the street, he met the watchman again:

"Good morrow, sir," said the Connaughtman.

"Good morrow kindly," said the watchman.

"Do you know me?" said the Connaughtman.

"How could I know you?" said the watchman, "I never saw you before."

"Don't you know the black that was here a while ago?"

"Yes," said the other.

"Well, I did let him go to bed, and here is myself. Now farewell, I am going to Dublin."

Away he started, took his passage in the steamboat, and landed safe in Liverpool. He worked for some time, and then wrote the following

LETTER TO HIS FATHER.

"AUGUST THE 'ONE.'

"My dear father,—I wrote you those few lines, hoping you're in bad health, as I am at present. I took my seat at two o'clock precisely, in the water-coach, Dublin, and landed safe in Leatherpool. When I did go there I saw my cousin Jack. He was a great distance away behind me. When I came up to him, 'pon my nonsense, it was not Jack at all. When I was going up the harvest to cut down the country, at my coming back I tumbled into work. I made 5s. a-day drawing masons to mortar eighteen stories high under ground. I'll be in May the first of Connaught. No more at present from your loving son."

"Direct your letter to Shawn Slattery, No. no place, Blowblather-street, Leaheperpool."